6: Shuster S-4 (no date) 1954 El Europe El

114 seeking asylum. There was a campful of escapees, mostly
727 Czechs and Slovaks, at Valka near Nuremberg.

We Americans used before the war to roam freely in the countries on the other side. Many of us either came from there or are descended from people who did. It is strange not to be able to cross the border now, and of course the fact makes it only too easy to consign the whole region to a sort of mono-
●181 chrome limbo. We need to remind ourselves constantly that here are some of the oldest, most cultivated, most individualistic, and most heroic of the nations of the West. Were one merely to list all the deeds of great valor which have been wrought here in more than two thousand years, or all the notable works of art, music, and literature which were created by men at home in these regions, the summary would be a brilliant one, indeed. Yet it is no doubt primarily dedication to religion that gave these cultures their individuality and vitality.

121 For convenience's sake we may follow Julius Caesar's example and divide the whole area into three parts. The first embraces the lands which were once portions of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which collapsed in 1918 but, despite its faults, must in retrospect be termed one of the most coherent and civilized states known to modern history. Once I compared notes with Arnold Toynbee about the singular fact that wherever one crossed those vanished boundaries, whether to the north of Cracow or to the east of Budapest, the sense of coming into the familiar world of the West was immediate and unmistakable. There was a manifest ease and gracefulness of the art of living, reflected in all the many buildings, humble or ornate, in which that art found expression. Vienna, Prague, Budapest, Cracow, Zagreb, Bratislava—these cities were built by the collective genius which Austria somehow managed to evoke and nurture, even though the people who lived in them might more often than not talk of tyranny.

8: Black S-4 (no date) 1954 El Europe El

6 Peasantism: Its Ideology and Achievements

BRANKO M. PEŠELJ

I

That part of Europe which lies east of the Danzig-Trieste line is often referred to as "peasant Europe." This term indicates a twofold concept: Economically, "peasant Europe" stands for that part of the continent which is devoted primarily to agrarian production under the system of small and medium holdings and in which farming represents a tradition, a civilization, and a way of life. Sociologically and culturally, the term "peasant Europe" denotes an area in which by far the greatest portion of the population is peasant and forms a group whose economic, social, and cultural aspects have been genuinely preserved.

The differences between Eastern and Western Europe were less noticeable a hundred years ago than they were at the end of the Second World War. The industrial revolution which swept Western Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century generated profound economic and social changes over the continent as a whole, and contributed to its division into two distinct sectors. A consequence of this partition was the creation of unique social and economic conditions in Eastern Europe. These conditions, in turn, pro-

8: Black S-4 (no date) 1954 El Europe El

tentatively as a group settled on a determined territory, having its principal source of livelihood in a cultivation of the soil that is based on the system of the small farm, and possessing its own way of life and its own indigenous culture.

This definition will help us answer our second question; namely, what are the differences between the peasants and the farmers. For a long time the rural sociologists of the West made no distinction between these two groups, and it is only recently that adequate attention has been given to this problem. Today it is generally recognized that between these two rural societies there exist essential dissimilarities which result from a permanent infiltration by the cosmopolitan civilization into the rural orbit. This process has been far more intense in the European and American rural groups, the farmers, than in the genuine peasant population.

With this distinction in mind, the farmers and the genuine peasantry may be contrasted. Economically speaking, the farmers produce primarily for the market, abiding by the established norms of offer and demand. Although they are attached to the land, they consider it almost impersonally and from an economic point of view. Therefore, they are willing to move from one area to another when there are economic reasons. The peasants, on the other hand, produce primarily for home consumption. Because their land is a part of their heritage, they consider it personally, as a part of their life and of their family tradition.

Socially, life in the rural communities of the West has become increasingly urbanized. The peasant society of Eastern Europe has been infiltrated by urban ideas to a far lesser degree and has preserved, generally speaking, many of its original aspects.

Culturally, the indigenous traditions of the farmer population, if not completely vanished, are disappearing rapidly. In the genuine peasant society, cultural traits are still clearly

8: Black S-4 (no date) 1954 El Europe El

condition attached to such a speculation. Were the West to deny the principle of industrial transformation of these countries and to envisage their 'return to pastoral status,' the new managerial class together with the working class would range itself automatically against the West.

VI

The economic and social revolution which these countries have undergone has been imposed on them very largely from the outside. It has been successful because it was backed by the whole strength of a great military empire but also because the material and moral ravages of war and German occupation had shattered the prewar fabric of society and exposed its structural weaknesses. The society which is emerging from this revolution will be very different from the former one. Even if a true liberation of this part of Europe were to occur, the restitution of many old forms of life would not be feasible. The greatest harm that the captive nations have suffered and will suffer through the imposed revolution are the inflictions upon the souls and the minds of the people. Gradual de-Christianization, loosening of family ties, fear and distrust of political authorities and of the neighbor, Russification and falsification of national past, coarsening of manners, and the awful deposit of lies and prejudices of propaganda and non-technical schooling: all these are weapons which are levelled upon the minds and souls of the people. The undoing of these moral effects of Communist policies could only be gradual, and it would take a long time.

In the social and economic fields, the effects of Communism have not been so uniformly somber. That goods can be produced under Communism has been learned from Russian precedents. That Communism cannot assure to the people a decent standard of living is a fact that cannot be denied by any amount of propaganda, and it is also true that